

Istook criticizes immigration plan

By Greg Elwell, Staff Writer

EDMOND — President Bush's proposal to give three-year work visas to illegal workers and the topics of gay marriage and deficit spending were among those discussed Wednesday night during a town hall meeting hosted by U.S. Rep. Ernest Istook in the city council chambers.

Istook, R-Warr Acres, took the president to task for trying to give amnesty to undocumented workers, saying it rewards aliens who break the law while punishing those who try to enter the country by legal means.

"This is a bad proposal," he said.

The illegal workers would help businesses undercut employees and rival businesses, he said.

Istook suggested beefing up border patrols to stop the immediate immigration problem and try to improve the Mexican economy to remove the impetus for undocumented workers to enter the country.

Gary Anderson asked Istook what he thought about a recent Massachusetts Supreme Court ruling on gay marriage.

"Homosexual activists say it is a violation of their human rights to be denied the right to marriage," Istook said.

The recent ruling could be applied nationwide with the full faith and credit clause of the Constitution, which makes states respect the contracts and agreements made in other states.

Istook said the only way to prevent the effect was the Defense of Marriage Act, a constitutional amendment defining marriage as only taking place between a man and a woman.

He called civil unions "counterfeit marriages" and that all the benefits of same-sex marriage could be gained through contracts.

Concerns about government waste and Social Security were voiced by those in the audience. Istook said he is sponsoring the balanced budget amendment, and supports making tough decisions to make sure the United States doesn't make the same mistakes as debt-ridden California.

He said cuts had to be made if taxes were to remain low. Istook said even though he did not support the recent Medicare bill, he voted for it to keep a more expensive bill out.

"Ultimately, government only has what it takes from you," he said.

Istook's main beef was with the U.S. Senate, which he blamed for holding up energy bills.